

HOW TO... Use Styles in Word

Ever get bogged down by the different styles a document can contain? Rod Lawton explains how to use Word's Styles to give documents consistency and polish, and clarify the formatting on documents that others send to you

Are your Word documents a mess? It's all very well having dozens of fonts to choose from, and being able to apply countless permutations of size and style, but the results can often look like a dog's dinner. We've all been sent long, complicated documents full of headings and subheadings in so many different styles we don't know what is a sub-topic of what. Furthermore, we've all had our sensibilities offended by comic-book fonts and headings that are 'shouted' on the page in capitals, not to mention illegible and ghoulish font combinations.

Word 2003's Styles enable you to do two things. First, you can use them to make sure the documents you send to others are elegant masterpieces of clarity. Second, you can use the Styles Pane to unravel the spaghetti of styles that other people send to you. Styles can be applied to tables and bulleted lists, too. Here, though, we'll stick to paragraph and character styles, which are the easiest to learn and can make the biggest difference to your documents. For our example, we've used a document that has been assembled carelessly using a melange of fonts and formatting.

1 There are two ways of applying Styles. The first is to use the Styles drop-down menu on the Formatting palette. If this palette is not visible, go to the View menu and select Toolbars, Formatting. The Styles drop-down menu displays the name of the Style currently in use. This

might be Normal or Heading 1 or, if you've formatted a section of text manually, a list of the current text attributes such as Normal+Arial, Bold. This indicates that the text was originally in the Normal style, but that you've made changes.

Pick a new style from the drop-down menu. This menu lists not only Styles that have already been set up and used in the document but also those you've created by applying manual changes. Word 2003 will store these manual changes, creating new Styles dynamically. To get a better idea of how this works, and how to manage and edit these Styles, it's best to use the Styles and Formatting pane instead.

2 You can display the Styles and Formatting pane by clicking on the button to the left of the Styles menu on the Formatting toolbar, or by using Format, Styles and Formatting. The Formatting pane displays the same list of Styles as the Styles drop-down, but alongside each Style is a further drop-down menu, which can be used for editing each style. Make sure the Show menu at the bottom of the Styles and Formatting pane is set to Available formatting to ensure you're seeing what we're describing.

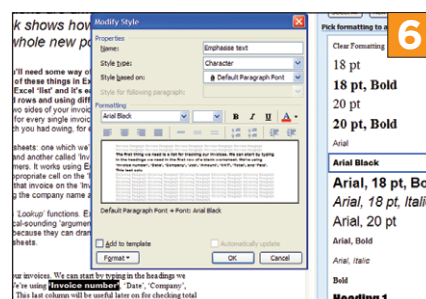
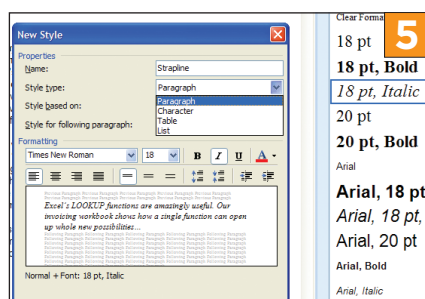
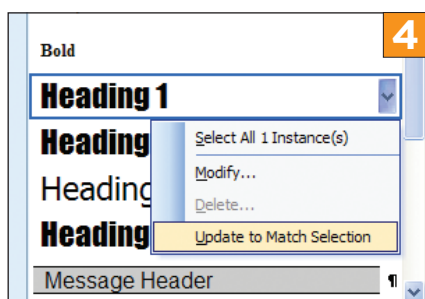
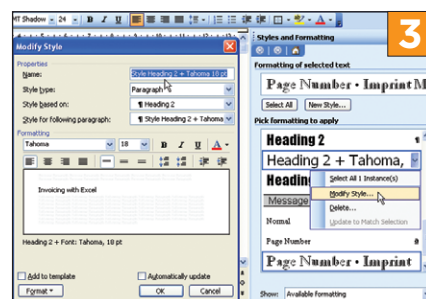
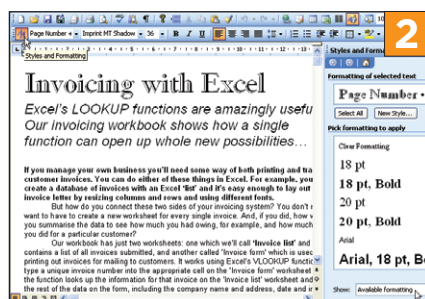
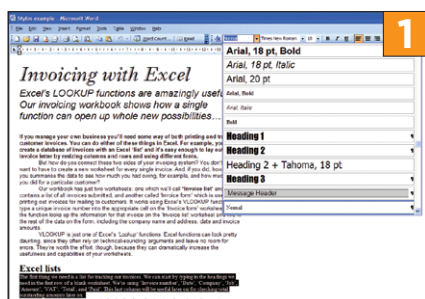
3 Even though some of these Styles have been created from manual formatting changes, they are still permanent. They are saved along with the document and appear again when it's re-opened. There are two problems with

these on-the-fly Styles. The first is that they're not descriptive. The names don't remind you what they're for and where you'd use them. The second is that if you don't choose descriptive names, you could end up creating numerous similar Styles for the same job.

Giving these Styles proper names will solve the problem. In the Styles and Formatting pane, move the cursor over a Style. A down-pointing arrow will appear to the right of its box. Click on the arrow and choose Modify Styles from the menu that appears. In the Modify Style dialog box, type in a new name that will help you identify the Style properly.

4 We've just explained how to identify and rename dynamic Styles. It's equally likely you'll want to use the Styles that are there already, but with modifications such as your own choice of fonts. First, select a piece of text and choose the font, size and style settings (bold, italic and so on) that you want. This will create a new on-the-fly Style. Then locate the existing, named Style that you want to modify. Don't click on this Style. Instead, open the drop-down menu alongside it and choose Update to Match Selection. The Style is updated with your new properties and the on-the-fly Style disappears.

The only Style you can't modify in this way is the Normal style. To change this, you need to use the Modify option from the drop-down Style menu. This displays the Modify Style dialog,



where you can choose a new font, size and other properties. If the property you want to change isn't visible, click the Format button, bottom left, and choose the category you need from the drop-down menu.

5 So far we've been concerned with Paragraph Styles. These are so called because the formatting they contain is applied to whole paragraphs. If you select a single word or a single letter within a paragraph, then apply a Paragraph Style, the whole paragraph takes on this Style's properties. These Styles contain formatting for the text characters in the paragraph (such as font and size) but they also contain paragraph-formatting options such as tabs, indents and line spacing. Paragraph Styles are identified in the Styles and Formatting pane by the Return symbol (¶).

You can create Paragraph Styles from scratch if you don't want to modify an existing Style. To do this, click on the New Style button at the top of the Styles and Formatting pane. The second pop-up in the New Style dialog is for choosing the Style type. Paragraph is the first option in the drop-down menu. With this selected, you can go on to choose the font, size and paragraph-formatting properties you want.

6 Unfortunately, you can't apply a Paragraph Style to a single word or phrase within a paragraph. For this, you need Character Styles. While you might use Paragraph Styles for large-scale formatting, Character Styles apply the fine tuning. Character Styles are identified by an underlined 'a' symbol (a). For example, the standard bold form of a font is sometimes not enough to make emphasised words stand out. A different, heavier font could do the trick. If your body copy is Times New Roman, for example, you could emphasise specific words or phrases using Arial Black.

You can create Character Styles from scratch using the New Style button and choosing Character in the Style Type menu. Alternatively, you can select a word or phrase, apply the text formatting you want, then find it in the Styles and Formatting pane and choose Modify from its

drop-down menu. Type in a name, make sure it's set as a Character Style and click OK.

7 Armed with an understanding of how Styles work, how to modify them and how to apply them, you can now restore some kind of structure and consistency to documents that have been written by other people.

First, use the Styles and Formatting pane to look out for the on-the-fly styles discussed above. These can be identified quickly from the names, which, as we've seen, will be made up of the font name and formatting attributes. Don't click on these Styles. This will simply apply them to any currently selected text. Instead, open the drop-down menu to the right and choose Select All Instances. Word will indicate in the menu how many instances there are in the document.

The first instance of this style will be highlighted in the document, and you'll be able to work out what the text is (a heading or caption, for example). Then choose an existing, named Style designed specifically for this job. The proper named Style is applied and, because you've already selected all the instances, the offending on-the-fly Style disappears.

8 By this time, you may have spotted incorrect uses of certain Styles here and there, or opportunities for combining two or more Styles into one. You can use the same process here as in the previous Step. Select all instances of the offending Style and choose the Style you want to use. It doesn't take long to whittle down a huge list of Styles to a much smaller and more manageable set of named Styles. In the screenshot, you can see that the list of styles has been reduced to a tidy, manageable number.

9 Choosing the right font is vital. Use the smallest number of fonts you can, and pick fonts with the strongest possible contrast.

It's preferable to get by with no more than two fonts. Times New Roman may be old-fashioned, but it's compact, legible and one of the best fonts there is for large quantities of body copy. For a contrasting heading or display

font, you could use Arial Black or Impact. Impact is more compact, which means you can get lots of characters on a line. You may be tempted by comic or novelty typefaces such as the Imprint MT Shadow originally used for the heading on the example document. They can be effective, but only if their style reflects the tone and content of the document. Here, for a factual technical explanation, it's too ornate so we've replaced it with Impact, which gives the document a more authoritative air.

10 When you're choosing Styles for headings, you might want to pay attention to the Heading 1, Heading 2 and Heading 3 Styles in the Styles and Formatting pane. The numbers go all the way up to 9, depending on how many you've used in the document. These are tied in with Word's outlining system. Each heading is subordinate to the one before, so Heading 2 headings are sub-topics of Heading 1 settings. You can see how this works by switching to Outline on the View menu.

11 Word uses outlines to prepare items such as tables of contents, and to generate a Document Map to help you navigate through longer documents. You'll find the Document Map option on the View menu. It lists the headings and sub-headings in your outline in a collapsible hierarchy, like folders and subfolders in Windows Explorer. Simply click on a heading to go straight to that point in the document.

12 At some point, you may want to create another document with the same set of Styles. If this happens a lot, save your document as a Template. First, delete all the text. The Styles will still be part of the document. Use File, Save As and open the Save as Type drop-down menu at the bottom of the dialog box to choose the Document Template option. When you come to create a new Word document, choose File, New to display the New Document pane. In the Templates section, select 'On my computer' to display the Templates dialog box. Your new Template should be visible in the General tab. 

